

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE 12 NOON THURSDAY, JANUARY 31, 2019

Diocese of Baton Rouge Releases Names of Clergy with Credible Allegations of Sexual Abuse

The Diocese of Baton Rouge today released the names of clergy against whom there have been one or more credible allegations of sexual abuse of minors or vulnerable adults. Also on the list is one seminarian whose file was among 1033 files reviewed.

Bishop Michael G. Duca released the list at a press conference at the Catholic Life Center in Baton Rouge.

The Bishop made the following statement:

“Today I have the sad and profoundly humbling task of publishing the names of all priests, and in our case, a bishop and one seminarian, against whom there are credible allegations of sexual abuse of minors and/or vulnerable adults in the Diocese of Baton Rouge. This list is based on the review of all 1033 clergy personnel files of the Diocese of Baton Rouge from its formation in 1961 to the present.

“When I committed myself and the Diocese to this task soon after my arrival, my first concern was and has been for the persons victimized by this abuse who have often felt betrayed and unsupported by the Church. It has been my hope that this will be an important step that will help those men and women whose lives have been so deeply violated. I have also hoped that this will give a sense of the scope of the allegations in this Diocese. My prayer is that this list will be a sign of a new level of transparency and openness in the way we respond to allegations of abuse and care for the victims.

“Some have asked why must we do this. As I said in my Sunday letter, the fact that this wound will not heal tells us that we must continue to bring everything into the light. This is not easy. I have listened to some victims share their stories, and there are no words to express the depth of sadness and shame that was experienced in our Church and is part of OUR diocesan history. It is hard to lay this list out for all to see, but real renewal and healing cannot take place until we acknowledge the truth of our past.

“This list reflects the lives of real people and a path of pain and suffering that affects most deeply the persons who are victims of abuse, but also the friends and family that journey with them and the innocent family members of the priests who are accused. Each name represents a unique case. Some only had one victim and others abuse gouged a wide path of pain in the lives of many victims. In some cases the victims were male and in others female. But there is one thing, most importantly, they have in common, they all have been credibly accused of sexual abuse of a minor or minors.

“I know that there may be some names that are a surprise and some revelations will cause pain in extended families and friends. I deeply regret this. It is my hope that all those friends and family affected by this list will be treated with the respect they deserve.

"In the process of creating this list of names I have heard from some, and even felt this myself in the beginning, that once this is done we can move beyond the crisis mode and get back to normal. But I have come to see quite clearly that in this thinking there is already a return to an old standard to once again "sweep it under the carpet." This list is not the end but an attempt to open the door on child sexual abuse that none of us want to open. In every case of abuse on this list I am sure that the victim was told, "don't tell anyone." They heard this from their abuser, but also from the Church, sometimes overtly, "Okay, we will take care of Father and you just keep this a secret," or they felt an unspoken institutionally expressed rule of the Church that, *you just are not supposed to talk about these things*. Unfortunately, to keep the status quo the victims of abuse must bear the pain for others' peace of mind and must do this alone. My hope is that this list is a concrete sign that we do want to talk about this. Hopefully a victim of abuse will see a name on this list and say, that's me, and this will give them the courage to go to a trusted friend, counselor, family member or come talk to me and share their story and no longer bear the pain alone. We must be willing to share their pain, admit our part in this tragedy so that we can help ease their burden and be for the victims of sexual abuse a support and not a barrier on the path to healing. So this list is not the final piece of "dealing with this" but rather I see it as a beginning step in a foundational change in our Church's way of acting that will renew all the programs we have in place to protect our children with a focus on the healing of the victims of abuse rather than the protection of the status quo."

An allegation of sexual abuse is considered credible when the Bishop believes that, after careful investigation and consultation with professionals and upon the recommendation of the Diocesan Independent Review Board, an incident of sexual abuse of a minor or a vulnerable adult occurred, or probably occurred, with the possibility that it did not occur being highly unlikely.

In other words, while not absolutely certain, an allegation of sexual abuse is credible when there is a high degree of probability that the abuse did occur.

The diocese has made every effort to ensure that the list is complete.

In late 2018, the diocese had all of its clergy personnel files from its founding in 1961 to the present time carefully examined individually.

This painstaking review was conducted by the independent law firm of Hebert, Spencer & Fry, L.L.P. with the assistance of staff of the nationally-recognized accounting and consulting firm of Postlethwaite & Netterville, APAC, consisting of two attorneys, three certified fraud and forensic examiners/investigators, a human resources professional with 20 years of HR experience and a certified complex-project manager.

The list is dynamic. The receipt and subsequent determination of a new credible allegation against a priest or deacon, living or dead, will result in an immediate updating of the list.

Clergy are listed in four categories. Both diocesan priests and order, or congregation priests, are listed. Diocesan priests, usually called parish priests, generally serve in the dioceses in which they are ordained and are subject to the authority of the local bishop. Order priests are assigned

by their provinces and serve all over the country and world. Dominicans (O.P.), Claretians (C.M.F) and Jesuits (S.J.) are examples of order or congregation priests.

To the best of the diocese's knowledge, no priest or deacon of the diocese or other clergy against whom a credible allegation of abuse has been made is currently serving in any ministry, even as a retired cleric.

This press release and the list of clergy are available on the diocesan website at www.diobr.org. Also available is a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs).

The questions answered in the FAQs are as follows:

What information are you releasing? Whose names are being listed?

How do you define "sexual abuse"?

How do you define "vulnerable adult"?

What are the criteria for inclusion on the list?

What do you mean by a Credible Allegation?

What is the Independent Review Board?

Is the list of those accused complete?

Why is 1961 used as the cut-off date?

Why are you releasing this list now?

Are any accused priests or deacons still in active ministry?

If clergy had harmed children, why were some reassigned to new locations after they offended?

If a priest has had a Credible Allegation made against him, is he allowed to continue in priestly ministry?

What are you doing to make sure that clergy sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults doesn't happen now?

What should I do if I've been abused by a priest or deacon of the diocese? (**Also see below.**)

What happens when a report is received? What makes it a credible allegation?

Does the diocese work with law enforcement authorities to investigate reports of abuse by clergy?

If you or someone you know has been abused by clergy, or anyone else, you are strongly urged first to contact the appropriate law enforcement or child-protection agency in the location in which the incident took place. If the abuse involved clergy, you are further encouraged to contact the Victim Assistance Coordinator of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, Mrs. Amy Cordon, by calling a special telephone hotline at (225) 242-0250. The Diocese wants to assist with professional counseling and pastoral care if the victim is open to them. If the victim is currently a minor, the Diocese will immediately report the incident to civil authorities in every case as required by law.

Note: For additional information on the policies that govern the matters discussed above, please visit the following weblinks:

For the *Policy of the Diocese of Baton Rouge Regarding Sexual Abuse of Minors by An Employee*:

http://www.diobr.org/images/2016_Revised_Policy_SAM.pdf

For the *Code of Ethics and Behavior for Adults who Minister with Minors in the Diocese of Baton Rouge*:

http://www.diobr.org/images/Code_of_Ethics_English.pdf

For the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*:

<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/charter.cfm>

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